

# DANA BEYERLE: April 27 tornadoes hold film distinctions

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The April 27 tornado outbreak may be the most videographed in Alabama history, much of it shot by amateurs with cellphones or small video cameras. The National Weather Service said it will use selected photos in training and for research. Jim Stefkovich, meteorologist in charge of the National Weather Service in Birmingham, said there are “so many” videos out there. “We’re sorting through everything right now,” he said.

The service’s first task is to help with storm response and then collect historical information. “Noting that this is historical, we will be using this for training,” Stefkovich said. “We’ll look at pictures and video and look at what’s going on with the storm compared with computer models and other data.”

## WAIVERS GRANTED

State school Superintendent Joe Morton has granted missed-day waivers to 51 of the state’s 132 school systems. As of late Thursday, Morton waived make-up days for 27 city systems and 24 county systems whose students couldn’t attend classes because of the April 27 tornado outbreak. A new state law allows the state superintendent to waive a requirement for students to make up missed days.

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

“On Tuesday, a three-judge panel of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals failed to reverse my flawed, politically-motivated prosecution ... even in light of the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling that says, in short, that political contributions in and of themselves aren’t bribery,” said former Gov. Don Siegelman, after the appeals court listed five counts of his 2006 conviction while throwing out two. He faces resentencing.

## FOREST RECOVERY

Gov. Robert Bentley established the Alabama Forest Recovery Task Force to remove storm-felled timber and get it to some type of market. According to a preliminary estimate, the April storms damaged at least 231,181 acres in 35 counties for an estimated loss of \$294 million, Bentley said.

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“Alabama forests are an important part of the storm recovery process both in terms of the beauty and recreation they provide, but also for the economic value they have and the jobs that the forest products industry provides to Alabama’s overall economy,” he said.

Louisiana Pacific Corp. executive Tommy Thompson is the task force chairman, Bentley said. It includes 33 members from business, government and the forest industry. The objectives are to remove damaged timber as quickly as possible to usage or storage facilities, expand the market for damaged timber and help landowners reforest, among other objectives.

“It’s imperative that the clean-up and salvage process begins quickly because the wood starts degrading as soon as it hits the ground,” Chris Isaacson, president of the Alabama Forestry Association, said. State Forester Linda Casey said, “The creation of the Forest Recovery Task Force is the first step in ensuring that Alabama forest land, urban forests, and our natural resources will be revitalized in the affected areas.” The first meeting is scheduled at 1 p.m. Tuesday at the Alabama Cattlemen’s Association in Montgomery.

## DUNN INVESTIGATING

Alabama Public Service Commission member Terry Dunn said the PSC is looking into whether federal funds can be used to offset Alabama Power Co. costs of fixing tornado-damaged transmission equipment.

“Early estimates of the cost to restore the system to pre-storm efficiency are approaching \$280 million,” Dunn said. “We’re exploring every strategy possible, including temporary adjustments of PSC rules in order to provide more flexibility in the use of a disaster reserve fund.” Dunn said the PSC’s goal is to recover from the storm without adding costs to customers.

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## FACT OF THE WEEK

The number of confirmed Alabama deaths from the April 27 storms is 238, Gov. Robert Bentley’s office said. The death toll was 236 but two additional fatalities were reported in Marion County. Tuscaloosa County had the most fatalities with 41, followed by DeKalb with 33 and Franklin with 26.